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SUBJECT: MACEDONIA CONTINUES FIGHT AGAINST TIP; NEW  
PROGRAMS AND A WAVE OF ARRESTS

#### SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) Macedonia continues to make progress in fighting trafficking in persons (TIP), aggressively pursuing traffickers in a wave of recent arrests and prosecutions, many involving minor victims. Additionally, the GOM's Anti-TIP Commission has worked with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy to gather data on TIP awareness and developed and conducted TIP-prevention programs in communities throughout Macedonia. The Commission also recently conducted trainings for journalists on legal issues related to TIP. Finally, the National Anti-TIP Commission Secretary, Kiro Todorovski, inspired by a recent International Visitors, Leadership Program on TIP issues, has shared Macedonia's best practices with other colleagues throughout Europe, and has drafted a plan for a national database of child-crime perpetrators, based on the U.S. model, which he has put before the new Government. End Summary.

#### POLICE DISCOVER OTHER VICTIMS OF TIP

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¶2. (SBU) Trafficking of Minors: In the last six months police arrested 18 perpetrators in six cases of trafficking of minors. Eight minors aged 9-17 years, all Macedonian nationals, were identified as victims.

¶3. (SBU) In a February case, parents and another relative permitted the sexual abuse of a minor child by a taxi driver, who, in return, paid them money and provided transportation free of charge. Four persons -- the family members and the taxi driver -- were charged in the case, and remain in custody awaiting trial. The child victim was taken to the TIP shelter.

¶4. (SBU) In a March case, two Gevgelia residents were charged with trafficking of a 16-year old female. The victim was taken to the TIP shelter, and the suspected perpetrators remain in custody awaiting trial.

¶5. (SBU) In an April case, a nine-year-old girl from Pallatica, near Tetovo, was sold by her father to the owner of a village cafe for MKD 7,000 (less than USD 200) to work as a companion to customers. Police became involved when the bar owner prevented the father from taking his daughter back home after learning she was not attending school and was going to be re-sold to an owner of a night club in Gostivar. Police suspected that her 14 year-old sister was also a victim and took them both to the TIP victims, shelter. Five

persons were charged in the case, and all remain in custody.

¶16. (SBU) In a July case the owner of a cafe in Gevgelia and her assistant were arrested for assisting labor exploitation and trafficking of two minor girls, aged 9 and 14. The owner and her remain in custody awaiting trial and the victims remain in the TIP shelter.

¶17. (SBU) In another July case, authorities pressed charges against the owner of a Tetovo bar and his assistant for sexual and labor exploitation of a 14 year-old girl and forced prostitution of a 17 year-old girl. Both remain in custody awaiting trial, and the victims remain in the TIP shelter.

¶18. (SBU) Forced Prostitution: In the past six months, police investigators have discovered a total of six cases of forced prostitution and have arrested 11 perpetrators who remain in detention awaiting trial. Four of the cases are being prosecuted as criminal acts of &intermediation and prostitution8 committed by five persons, while two others fall under &pandering and enabling sexual acts8 committed by six persons. The victims are seven Macedonian nationals, aged 14-26 years.

¶19. (SBU) Human Trafficking: In a March case, police arrested three residents of the Shuto Orizari section of Skopje for trafficking of an 18-year old Bosnian for the purpose of forced marriage. The victim was taken to the TIP shelter, and the three suspected perpetrators remain in custody awaiting trial.

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¶10. (SBU) Human Smuggling: In the past six months, police have charged 26 persons with human smuggling in 4 separate cases. All suspects remain in custody awaiting trial. In the largest of the human smuggling cases, dubbed "Operation Dragon," 24 Macedonians were arrested in two separate cases of trafficking 18 Chinese citizens, who entered Macedonia from Serbia, seeking to transit to Greece.

¶11. (SBU) In a high-profile case in July, police arrested a known trafficker for illegally harboring five women, four Serbians and a Bulgarian, in the Tetovo bar he owns. The case is being prosecuted as &smuggling of migrants8 since the women were not found to be held against their will, having returned for a third time to Macedonia after two previous prosecutions. The bar owner is in custody awaiting trial. The women were taken to the shelter, but have since departed.

¶12. (SBU) In another case in early August, police discovered six Afghan citizens, aged 18-23, hidden in a truck with Turkish license plates at the Macedonian-Albanian border. The Turkish driver was arrested and charged with &smuggling of migrants8. He is in custody awaiting trial, while the Afghans were sent to the shelter for illegal migrants.

#### ANTI-TIP COMMISSION CONDUCTS TRAININGS AND DEVELOPS NEW PROGRAMS

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¶13. (SBU) The Anti-TIP Commission, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, conducted a national poll of over 1000 respondents on TIP awareness. Based on the data, the Anti-TIP Commission organized and conducted TIP-prevention town hall meetings with NGOs, youth organizations and local authorities in several municipalities throughout Macedonia. The Commission also provided additional training for social workers dealing with victims of TIP, and to journalists to better inform their reporting on TIP cases.

¶14. (SBU) The Commission successfully completed the

establishment of the Trans-national Referral Mechanism for victims of TIP in cooperation with the International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). Macedonia also signed an MoU with ICMPD and became a partner state of the EU countries in the organization.

¶15. (SBU) Inspired by his recent International Visitors, Leadership Program (IVLP) on Anti-TIP strategies, National Anti-TIP Commission Secretary Kiro Todorovski drafted a plan for developing a public national register of child sex crime perpetrators, which is currently being reviewed by the government. He expects the GoM will approve and fund the program in coming months.

#### FUTURE STEPS OF THE COMMISSION

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¶16. (SBU) The Anti-TIP Commission has developed an aggressive agenda for the coming six months, including developing a detailed budget for the future needs of the Anti-TIP Commission, providing additional training for prevention and prosecution of TIP crimes, training of a National Reporter for anti-TIP efforts in cooperation with OSCE, and developing a separate shelter for domestic victims of TIP.

¶17. (SBU) The GoM at the highest levels is committed to combating trafficking in persons. In a July 23 meeting with Interior Minister Jankuloska, the DCM noted that Macedonia's effective performance merited a Tier 1 ranking in the most recent June 2008 Trafficking in Persons Report, and emphasized the critical importance of prosecuting traffickers to protect victims and to prevent people from becoming victims. Jankuloska concurred fully and pledged strengthened efforts. In a July 28 meeting, the Ambassador indicated to Minister Jankuloska that while Macedonia should be proud of the efforts and performance that resulted in the Tier 1 ranking, the GoM will have to further increase its efforts to maintain that standing. Minister Jankuloska replied that reaching that standard took a real commitment and a great effort and noted that the MoI now has the responsibility to

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sustain that level of effort and is committed to make further progress in combating trafficking of persons.

#### COMMENT

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¶18. (SBU) Macedonia is not resting on its laurels following its designation by the State Department as a Tier 1 country, but instead is pressing forward in a range of areas. Excellent coordination between the Anti-TIP Commission and other government agencies, the police, and NGOs continues to facilitate progress across a range of TIP-related areas. We expect further progress in coming months, including the development of a new shelter dedicated to the specific long-term needs of domestic victims of TIP, who are now co-located with foreign victims who are often only in the shelter briefly during a transit period, and further development of a regional witness protection program as a new option for victims of trafficking. End Comment.

Navratil